

Recommendation and Problems Needing Early Attention

On the basis of the evidence marshalled in the U.S. Metric Study, this report recommends that the United States change to the International Metric System through a coordinated national program over a period of ten years, at the end of which the nation will be predominantly metric.

Within the broad framework of the national program, industries, the educational system, and other segments of society should work out their own specific timetables and programs, dovetailing them with the programs of other segments. This can be done effectively only after there has been a decision to go metric and after joint planning by all groups to be affected by the change. Because of the scope of such a program, the Federal Government would have to firmly back it.

There will have to be a central coordinating body. It could be constituted in different ways. Congress could assign the coordinating function to an existing Government agency, or it might appoint a special group, such as a national commission, to perform the task. In any case, the coordinating body will have to be able to draw upon all segments of the society for information and advice. At the end of the period of transition to metric, or possibly earlier, the coordinating body will have completed its work and will then cease to function.

The coordinating body would work with all groups in the society that were formulating their own plans, so as to ensure that the plans meshed. It would help to decide how the public could best be familiarized with the metric system. It would advise government agencies, at all levels (state, local, and Federal), of changes in codes and regulations that would require attention. And it would have to anticipate and deal with other special problems, such as those described later in this chapter.

Groups of industries would coordinate their efforts with the help of trade associations and agencies of Federal, state and local governments. State weights and measures



All interests should be represented

agencies would cooperate in making the changeover through their National Conference on Weights and Measures. Other groups, including educators, labor, standards making bodies and consumers, would be brought in at the start. A hierarchy of definitive plans would be developed by all these participants for themselves. And each plan could provide for contingencies, such as failures to meet deadlines.

Education and International Standards

Two areas merit immediate attention, even if a national program is not adopted: education and international standards.

It is urgent that the U.S. begin now to participate more vigorously in world standards-making. As was discussed in Chapter VI, international standards will increasingly influence world trade. The great majority of these standards



"... as early as possible, all children should be taught metric as the primary language of measurement."

*From NBS Final Report to Congress
"A Metric America" (July 1971)*

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